

109TH CONGRESS
1ST Session

H. CON. RES. 280

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Mourning the horrific loss of life caused by the floods and mudslides that occurred in October 2005 in Central America and Mexico and expressing the sense of Congress that the United States should do everything possible to assist the affected people and communities.

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Whereas on October 4, 2005, Hurricane Stan made landfall on Mexico's Gulf coast, bringing sustained winds of 80 miles per hour before weakening to a tropical storm and generating separate storms across southern Mexico and Central America;

Whereas Hurricane Wilma, a category four hurricane, made landfall in Cozumel, Mexico on October 22, 2005, and

stalled over the Yucatan Peninsula bringing over 60 inches of rain to some parts of the Peninsula and causing severe flooding, over 75,000 evacuations, damaging between 30–40 percent of the houses in Cancun, and causing severe damage to the area’s vital tourism industry;

Whereas Hurricane Beta made landfall on October 30, 2005, near Karabal and Sandy Bay, Nicaragua, as a category two hurricane, displacing thousands of people, damaging critical communications and transportation infrastructure, and bringing destructive winds and rains to these and approximately 50 other communities;

Whereas the heavy rainfall associated with these storms caused widespread and severe flooding that has affected millions of people across Central America, including the people of Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala, and the people of Mexico;

Whereas, as of October 12, 2005, the flooding had killed an estimated 2,000 people across Central America and Mexico, according to government estimates which are expected to be revised upwards;

Whereas rains have produced more than 900 landslides, burying entire villages and causing numerous deaths in Guatemala, with official government estimates confirming 654 deaths, 577 people missing, and more than 120,000 people affected across 621 communities in the provinces of Escuintla, Guatemala, Quetzaltenango, Chiquimula, San Marcos, Chimaltenango, El Quiché, and Baja Verapa;

Whereas many of the affected areas are especially vulnerable to natural disasters and lack access to basic healthcare, sanitation, and medical services;

Whereas the flooding and landslides have damaged housing and public infrastructure in 251 of the 331 municipalities in Guatemala and sustained rains across much of the country have hampered ongoing relief efforts;

Whereas two simultaneous emergencies in El Salvador—the severe flooding caused by Tropical Storm Stan and the eruption of the Santa Ana volcano on October 1, 2005—have affected half of the country and forced the evacuation of more than 69,000 people to local shelters;

Whereas Tropical Storm Stan caused massive flooding in the Mexican States of Veracruz, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Tabasco, Puebla, Hidalgo, and Guerrero and forced the evacuation of approximately 370,000 people from nearly 3,000 communities to local shelters, according to the Government of Mexico;

Whereas extensive rainfall in the Costa Rican provinces of Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Puntarenas, and San Jose in the Pacific and Central Valley caused severe flooding and landslides, forcing more than 1,000 people in 459 communities to evacuate to local shelters, damaged 550 houses, 117 bridges, and 11 educational buildings, and more than 281 roads have been blocked or damaged by mudslides;

Whereas many families in these affected areas are homeless and in desperate need of reconstruction help;

Whereas the United States Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) initially provided \$150,000 to USAID/Guatemala for the local purchase and distribution of emergency relief supplies, as well as for helicopter support, including fuel and rental of local helicopters and an additional

\$1,200,000 to USAID/Guatemala for emergency grants to nongovernmental organization partners for emergency health, water and sanitation, and shelter activities;

Whereas USAID/OFDA committed \$200,000 to support the Pan American Health Organization's (PAHO) emergency health and water and sanitation activities as part of the United Nations joint appeal;

Whereas USAID/OFDA is working closely with the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico to coordinate transportation and distribution of relief commodities to affected communities and for the local purchase and distribution of emergency relief supplies, water, and food;

Whereas on October 8, 2005, the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) deployed a 58-person team to Guatemala City to assist with ongoing disaster relief efforts in southwestern Guatemala and sent nine United States Army helicopters to conduct search and rescue missions and provide for the transportation of emergency relief supplies, including food, medical supplies, and communications equipment, to affected areas, as well as flying in host nation firefighters, emergency aid workers, and doctors; and

Whereas the United States initially has provided \$100,000 to the Mexican Red Cross for the local purchase and distribution of emergency relief supplies to aid victims of Hurricane Wilma, and a USAID/OFDA team is working with USAID/Mexico, local disaster officials, and other organizations to assess impacts, aid requirements, and deliver further emergency assistance: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That—

3 (1) Congress—

4 (A) mourns the horrific loss of life caused
5 by the floods and mudslides that occurred in
6 October 2005 in Central America and Mexico;

7 (B) expresses its deep condolences to the
8 families of the many victims;

9 (C) commits to provide the necessary re-
10 sources and to stand by the people of Costa
11 Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico in
12 the relief, recovery, and rebuilding efforts;

13 (D) applauds the prompt humanitarian re-
14 sponse to this natural disaster by the United
15 States Agency for International Development,
16 the United States Armed Forces, and other de-
17 partments and agencies of the United States
18 Government, the United Nations and other
19 international organizations, and nongovern-
20 mental organizations;

21 (E) recognizes the growing support by
22 international donors for relief efforts;

23 (F) affirms its commitment to additional
24 United States support for relief and long-term

1 reconstruction efforts in areas affected by the
2 flooding;

3 (G) urges continued attention by donors
4 and relief agencies to the needs of vulnerable
5 populations in the stricken countries, particu-
6 larly those left homeless by this disaster and
7 whose welfare and economic livelihoods have
8 been disrupted;

9 (H) urges assistance which targets imme-
10 diate and long-term infrastructure needs, with a
11 special emphasis on improvements that aim to
12 increase emergency preparedness and withstand
13 future natural disaster events; and

14 (I) encourages the Administration and
15 other international donors to provide immediate
16 and long-term assistance for the reconstruction
17 of affected infrastructure that is a requisite for
18 the economic and social development of the dev-
19 astated communities; and

20 (2) it is the sense of Congress that it should be
21 the policy of the United States—

22 (A) to promote economic growth and im-
23 proved living standards, reduce poverty, and
24 promote democracy and the rule of law in the
25 countries of Central America;

1 (B) in concert with multilateral humani-
2 tarian organizations, the Organization of Amer-
3 ican States and the Inter-American Develop-
4 ment Bank, to actively support the reconstruc-
5 tion of affected communities in places to be de-
6 termined by respective governments in collabo-
7 ration with representatives of such commu-
8 nities;

9 (C) to expedite humanitarian relief and re-
10 construction efforts in order to mitigate the im-
11 mediate and long-term threats to public health,
12 economic development, and security in Central
13 America;

14 (D) to provide technical assistance to Cen-
15 tral American governments in order to
16 strengthen the capacity of first responders and
17 governmental institutions at the national, pro-
18 vincial, and local levels in the area of disaster
19 management coordination and preparedness, in-
20 cluding information and communications sys-
21 tems to help with the response to natural disas-
22 ters; and

23 (E) to encourage the governments of these
24 countries to improve disaster mitigation tech-

- 1 niques and compliance among all key sectors of
- 2 their societies.

Passed the House of Representatives December 6,
2005.

Attest:

Clerk.